

January 13, 2022

Christopher L. Eisgruber
President
Princeton University
1 Nassau Hall
10 Palmer Square
Princeton
New Jersey 08542
By email: eisgruber@princeton.edu

Re: Princeton/Removal of Seyed Hossein Mousavian/Boycott of Princeton

Dear President Eisgruber:

United Against Nuclear Iran (“UANI”)¹ is writing to convey its concerns regarding Princeton University’s employment of Seyed Hossein Mousavian as a purported Middle East Security and Nuclear Policy Specialist at the Program on Science and Global Security when in fact he is an agent of the Iranian regime.

In an Iranian government-sponsored documentary glorifying the final days in the life of Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps-Quds Force (“IRGC-QF”) Commander Major-General Qasem Soleimani, Mousavian gleefully remarked that “An American told me that [former U.S. Iran Envoy] Brian Hook’s wife had not slept for several days and that she was shaking and crying. That’s how afraid they were.” To be clear, Soleimani was at the time of his death responsible for more murders, injuries and kidnappings of Americans and American allies than any other person alive. At the time of his death by an American drone strike he was plotting further murderous actions. While working for Princeton, Mousavian honored Soleimani by attending his funeral in Iran and participated in propaganda glorifying his actions and reveling in the threats to Americans. These actions are a disgrace to Princeton and he must be summarily dismissed.

Mousavian has defended his actions on Twitter in recent days, alleging that he only meant that “US/Iran mutual threats...cause harms to families...I have reiterated that the US and Iran should avoid threatening and the use of force and resolve their dispute through diplomacy.”² But these claims do not hold up to scrutiny given his attendance at Soleimani’s funeral and his participation in a documentary hailing Soleimani, a man who had been internationally sanctioned as a global terrorist mastermind.

¹ UANI is a not-for-profit, non-partisan, advocacy organization whose mission is to promote the cessation of economic and financial support of the Islamic Republic of Iran by corporations and business until the Iranian regime verifiably abandons its drive for nuclear weapons and support for terrorism and human rights violations. (<http://www.unitedagainstnucleariran.com>).

² Hossein Mousavian, “[Twitter Post](#),” January 9, 2022.

Given his history of actions on behalf of Iran’s murderous regime, Mousavian should never have been employed by Princeton in the first place. Please therefore explain why Princeton University has employed and continues to employ this man. As you know, Mousavian has served the Iranian regime in a variety of capacities, including as head of the Foreign Policy Committee of its Supreme National Security Council and a member of its nuclear negotiating team during the Khatami administration. From 1990 to 1997 he served as ambassador to Germany, during which time Iran carried out several assassinations, including of Iranian Kurdish dissidents on German soil. According to some accounts, a Berlin court found that Iran’s embassy in Bonn “served as the headquarters for the terrorists involved”³ and that Hezbollah—a U.S.-designated foreign terrorist organization—spearheaded the attack cell at the direction of the Iranian government.⁴ As you are surely aware, after the verdict, Germany announced that it decided to expel four Iranian diplomatic staff, saying “the participation of Iranian state agencies, as found in the court verdict, represents a flagrant violation of international law.”⁵ Germany also reportedly demanded that Mousavian be recalled back to Tehran, after concluding that the 1992 assassinations were ordered by a special committee headed by Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. After the murders, Mousavian made the following absurd and offensive claim: “I repeat the words of our Majles leader from last week. ‘The murders in Berlin are undoubtedly the work of the Americans, and will not rest until the killers of the Kurdish leaders have been brought to justice.’”⁶



Scene in the Mykonos Restaurant in Berlin after the 1992 assassinations

³ Jerusalem Post, “[Iranian-Americans: Investigate Princeton prof. for crimes against humanity](#),” January 4, 2020.

⁴ West Point Combating Terrorism Center, “[Iran’s Deadly Diplomats](#),” August 2018.

⁵ CNN, “[German court implicates Iran leaders in ’92 killings](#),” April 10, 1997.

⁶ Hakakian, Roya, “[Assassins of the Turquoise Palace](#),” 2011.

The Mykonos assassinations were only one such murderous Iranian operation that took place during Mousavian’s tenure as Iran’s ambassador to Germany. In 1991, German intelligence intercepted a telephone call in which Kazem Darabi, who was linked to the IRGC and Hezbollah, was directed by someone at the Iranian Cultural Center in Cologne to recruit “Arab friends” from around Germany to assault members of the Iranian opposition at the Iran Cultural Festival in Dusseldorf. Later, Iranian dissident artist Fereydoun Farrokhzad was also brutally stabbed to death in Germany.⁷ According to a recent study by Radio Free Europe, Morteza Gholami, an Iranian intelligence officer who was stationed at Iran’s Embassy in Bonn where Mousavian was ambassador, met with Farrokhzad before he was killed and “threatened to kill [him] if he would not collaborate with the regime.”⁸ Morteza Rahmani Movahed, who was the first secretary at the Iranian Embassy in Bonn, also reportedly threatened to kill Farrokhzad if he did not work with Tehran before he was killed.

In a 2016 interview, Iran’s then Foreign Minister Javad Zarif affirmed that Mousavian is “completely tied to the regime and the country...and he has worked, and is currently working hard, [for it].”⁹ These connections and this record are deeply troubling.

The threat of Iranian attacks on Americans in the United States and abroad is real. According to the U.S. intelligence community’s 2021 Worldwide Threat Assessment, it assesses that “Iran remains interested in developing networks inside the United States—an objective it has pursued for more than a decade.”¹⁰ Just this month, the current Commander of the IRGC-QF Esmail Ghaani threatened such attacks inside the United States.¹¹ As you also know, the U.S. Justice Department recently indicted an Iranian intelligence network for attempting to kidnap the Iranian-American dissident, Masih Alinejad, on U.S. soil.¹² Just this month, U.S. National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan unsurprisingly released a statement condemning Iranian threats and provocations against U.S. citizens.¹³

It is therefore frankly scandalous that Princeton employs Mousavian while simultaneously receiving hundreds of millions of dollars in U.S. Government grants and contracts every year. For the 2021 financial year alone, Princeton received \$342 million from these sources, according to your own website.¹⁴

Princeton is content to pay the salary of an agent of the world’s most extreme terrorist country. Yet you have failed even to make any public comment on his most recent actions attending

⁷ Radio Free Europe, “[The Murder of Fereydoun Farrokhzad: Persons of Interest](#),” December 10, 2021.

⁸ Radio Free Europe, “[The Murder of Fereydoun Farrokhzad: Persons of Interest](#),” December 10, 2021.

⁹ Kasra Aarabi, “[Twitter Post](#),” January 9, 2022.

¹⁰ Office of the Director of National Intelligence, “[Annual Threat Assessment of the US Intelligence Community](#),” April 9, 2021.

¹¹ FoxNews, “[Iran Revolutionary Guards Commander says ‘revenge’ coming for Soleimani strike from ‘within’ US](#),” January 8, 2022.

¹² U.S. Department of Justice, “[Iranian Intelligence Officials Indicted on Kidnapping Conspiracy Charges](#),” July 13, 2021.

¹³ The White House, “[Statement by National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan on Iranian Threats and Provocations Against American Citizens](#),” January 9, 2022.

¹⁴ Princeton University, “[Financial Facts](#)”

Soleimani’s funeral and participating in Iranian propaganda lionizing one of the most murderous figures of the past forty years. While it is beyond our scope to take sides in the current heated debates taking place on campuses throughout the United States including Princeton, we nonetheless note Princeton’s alacrity in censuring, suspending or otherwise punishing other members of its academic staff for supposed moral transgressions of speech.

On July 26, 2020, Princeton classics scholar Professor Joshua T. Katz described his recent ‘bruising’ experience at Princeton in a Wall Street Journal op-ed.¹⁵ According to Professor Katz, following an article in which he described a defunct Princeton student group as a ‘local terrorist organization,’¹⁶ he “was immediately denounced on social media and condemned publicly by my department and the university president.” Professor Katz noted, “The president of Princeton, Christopher Eisgruber, told a student newspaper that I had violated my obligation to exercise free speech “responsibly,” stating that he “personally and strongly” objected to my false description” of the defunct student group.”¹⁷ As you know, the Wall Street Journal editorial board opined that the incident demonstrated a “lack of leadership”¹⁸ on your part, and further noted how, following student demands to purge former President Woodrow Wilson’s name from Princeton buildings, “the board decided—on Mr. Eisgruber’s recommendation—to excise the former U.S. President.”¹⁹

Please explain how it is even conceivable that Princeton purged President Woodrow Wilson but continues to employ Mousavian.

However one wishes to characterize the actions of figures from Princeton’s past and present, it is absolutely clear that they have never risen to the murderous behavior of Iran’s terrorist regime and its agent Mousavian. Evidently, you are quite comfortable in rapidly denouncing and taking action against your other colleagues who may have ‘transgressed’ some particular campus orthodoxy – especially if you suspect you have the backing of the student body. Your silence and absence of leadership is disgraceful on Mousavian’s scandalous behavior. He should not even be working in the United States – let alone at one of our flagship universities.

Finally, we note that Princeton is the current subject of a lawsuit filed by former student Xiyue Wang, who was arrested on sham charges and imprisoned in Iran from 2016-2019 while a doctoral candidate at Princeton. In the suit, Mr. Wang alleges, “Everything Princeton did and

¹⁵ Wall Street Journal, “[I Survived Cancellation at Princeton](#),” July 26, 2020.

¹⁶ “The Black Justice League, which was active on campus from 2014 until 2016, was a small local terrorist organization that made life miserable for the many (including the many black students) who did not agree with its members’ demands.” Joshua T. Katz, Quillette, “[A Declaration of Independence by a Princeton Professor](#),” July 8, 2020.

¹⁷ “While free speech permits students and faculty to make arguments that are bold, provocative, or even offensive, we all have an obligation to exercise that right responsibly, Joshua Katz has failed to do so, and I object personally and strongly to his false description of a Princeton student group as a ‘local terrorist organization.’” The Daily Princetonian, “[Eisgruber condemns professor’s op-ed that called Black Justice League a ‘terrorist organization’](#),” July 12, 2020.

¹⁸ Wall Street Journal, “[The Speech Police at Princeton](#),” July 14, 2020.

¹⁹ Wall Street Journal, “[The Speech Police at Princeton](#),” July 14, 2020.

abstained from doing was centered around absolving its institutional responsibility, protecting its institutional reputation, and maintaining its political relations with Iran.” As reported at the time:²⁰

Wang’s lawsuit threatens to reveal Princeton’s efforts to forge ties with Iran and the school’s internal deliberations after his arrest. The historian identifies researchers and scholars at Princeton he says are sympathetic to the Iranian regime who he claims stymied efforts to free him from prison. Wang notes that Seyed Hossein Mousavian, a former Iranian diplomat, serves as a scholar at Princeton.

In view of Mousavian’s employment at Princeton and your manifest reticence to terminate him, Mr. Wang’s contentions are not in the least surprising.

UANI is not in the business of threatening the boycott of great American seats of learning. Yet Mousavian is an extreme outlier as a mouthpiece, actor and agent for a terrorist state – indeed the world’s leading state sponsor of terrorism. Ultimately, “Ambassador Mousavian’s affiliation with Princeton is a stain on the university’s reputation and credibility,” as I recently noted.²¹ It is impossible for Princeton to be a safe, welcoming and credible place of learning for its other employees and its students so long as Mousavian remains employed at Princeton.

No responsible person should support or fund Princeton while Mousavian continues to be in its employ.

Therefore, we call on all responsible parties to suspend and/or terminate their financial support for Princeton while Mousavian remains at Princeton. We call for the immediate suspension/termination of U.S. Government grants and contracts to Princeton while Mousavian remains at Princeton.

We urge you to terminate Mousavian’s employment with Princeton immediately and we look forward to hearing from you to discuss this matter. Please let us hear from you at your earliest convenience and no later than January 17, 2022.

Thank you for your immediate attention to this matter.

Very truly yours,



Ambassador Mark D. Wallace

UANI is a not-for-profit, bi-partisan, advocacy group that seeks to prevent Iran from fulfilling its ambition to obtain nuclear weapons. UANI was founded in 2008 by Ambassador Mark D. Wallace, the late Ambassador Richard Holbrooke, and Middle East expert Ambassador Dennis Ross. UANI’s private sanctions campaigns and state and federal legislative initiatives focus on ending the economic and financial support of the Iranian regime by corporations until Iran verifiably abandons its drive for nuclear weapons, support for terrorism and gross human rights violations. Former U.S. Senator Joseph Lieberman is UANI’s Chairman. UANI’s Advisory Board consists of distinguished leaders in government, academia and business. See www.unitedagainstinucleariran.com/about/leadership.

²⁰ Washington Free Beacon, “[Historian Says Princeton Left Him To ‘Rot’ in Iranian Prison.](#)” December 23, 2020.

²¹ Al-Arabiya, “[Princeton scholar under fire for boasting about Iran threat against US over Soleimani.](#)” January 8, 2022.

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